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Cal Fed Public Hearing

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Elden Hughes
Director
Orchard Dale Water District

I am Elden Hughes from Whittier, California. I am a director of the Orchard Dale Water District. I grew up on a cattle ranch in a time when the Los Angeles Plain was still cattle and agriculture. Not many realize that at one time Los Angeles County's agricultural output in dollar value exceeded that of any other county in the United States.

Things change. We now bring our water from hundreds of miles away to the Los Angeles Plain. In some ways this has helped make us aware of just how precious water is. We still expect to be able to just turn the tap and have water come out, but we know ~~was~~ ^{it} is precious and it doesn't just happen.

Much of our water comes from the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta. I have ~~canoeed~~ ^{canoe} much of the Delta. The water in the Delta comes from ranges of the Sierra Nevada and the Southern Cascade and I have rafted most the rivers that feed the Delta.

Like water itself, the Delta is very precious and cannot be taken for granted. We have not been kind to the Delta.

Dams and diversions have, in large part, been the source of the Delta's sickness. More dams and diversions are not guaranteed to get the Delta to health. We may need ~~dams~~ ^{more} and we may need ~~diversions~~ ^{more}, but they must trail the priority list.

I recently toured the California Aqueduct and listened to people speak of the Peripheral Canal as though it was now a returned certainty. The proposed Peripheral Canal that was voted down in 1982 was going to be an environmental disaster if it had been built. Pity the poor salmon seeking the Sacramento River and finding that there were ten false Sacramentos feeding water to the Delta.

A portion of the old Peripheral Canal concept is being carried forward as the "Isolated Facility". We must be very careful we don't bring forward the errors of the past. Even though an agreement was reached to postpone consideration of the Isolated Facility for seven years, the seeds and even an accelerated start date and partial construction are in the June 99 DEIS. This is a mistake.

Let us give water conservation and ground storage an honest chance with the same kind of commitment and heavy investment required for dams and diversions. Let's restore the meadows, wetlands and forests. The land can go a long way toward taking care of us, but we need to take care of the land first.